

UAMS News Bureau

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**UAMS, LRPD Receive \$500,000 Grant to Create
Police, Social Worker Response Teams**

LITTLE ROCK — A \$500,000 grant from the federal Bureau of Justice Assistance will be used to create crisis response teams of Little Rock police officers and social workers that will be overseen by University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) medical staff.

The three-year grant, submitted by the Little Rock Police Department in collaboration with the UAMS Department of Psychiatry, will be used to hire four social workers to work with the police in situations involving individuals having a mental health crisis. The funding will also be used to train first responders on how to recognize a crisis situation and how to properly respond to it.

Lisa Evans, Ph.D., director of the UAMS Pulaski County Regional Crisis Stabilization Unit and an associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry, assisted with the grant application and will help train participants in the program, the first of its kind in Little Rock.

Approximately half the people in U.S. jails and over one third of the population of U.S. prisons have been diagnosed with a mental illness, according to Evans.

“We have continued to incarcerate the problem of mental illness, but there are several ways to solve it,” she said. “One way is for these people to go into treatment instead of jail, keep them out of the justice system where they are subject to discrimination and marginalization.”

“Mental health is an issue that continues to plague the communities in which we police. As the incidents in the communities evolve, so must our efforts to serve and protect,” said Little Rock Chief of Police Heath Helton. “This is the first of its kind in Little Rock, and we are thankful to do our part to address this national issue.”

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Evans said this program will not only be a source of pride for the city but also will allow the police to concentrate their efforts on crimes of a serious nature.

“Officers want to be able to focus on fighting crime. This program will allow specially trained officers and a social work team to respond to mental health issues while the rest of the team keeps fighting crime. We’re hoping that this program will evolve into a national model and help the city to utilize the resources of the police more effectively,” she said.

UAMS is the state's only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; a hospital; a main campus in Little Rock; a Northwest Arkansas regional campus in Fayetteville; a statewide network of regional campuses; and seven institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, Psychiatric Research Institute, Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, Translational Research Institute and Institute for Digital Health & Innovation. UAMS includes UAMS Health, a statewide health system that encompasses all of UAMS' clinical enterprise. UAMS is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. UAMS has 3,275 students, 890 medical residents and fellows, and five dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with more than 12,000 employees, including 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS, its regional campuses, Arkansas Children's, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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